

Charles M. Russell NWR Frequently Asked Questions

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Maps, Permits and Hunting Licenses

Is there a map of the refuge that is available?

Yes. You can find a link on the bottom of the “Home” page to access a detailed map of the east and west end of the Refuge, or a less detailed map showing its general location.

Is there a difference between the State (MT) and the Federal (CMR) hunting regulations?

Yes. You can find the Refuge specific regulations on the “Hunting and Regulations” page within the links in the side column. The current regulations are available as of May 1.

How do I get a copy of a map and regulations?

If you do not have access to a printer, you can contact the Refuge Headquarters (406) 538-8706 and we will mail you a copy for your convenience.

What permits do I need to hunt on the refuge?

You are required to comply with all State regulations and obtain a permit or license for each animal as required by the State. Certain tags are not valid on the Refuge (example: mule deer B-tags and elk A9/B12 tags in certain hunting districts). Please refer to the “2009 Charles M. Russell Hunting Regulations” link in the side bar of the “Hunting and Regulations” web page.

If I get a permit for one of the hunting districts on the Refuge can I hunt the Refuge?

If a state issued license or permit is obtained, it is legal to hunt within the boundaries of the Refuge within the designated Hunting District for your permit or license. Please refer to the “2009 Charles M. Russell Hunting Regulations” link in the side bar of the “Hunting and Regulations” web page for hunting regulations specific to the Refuge.

Hunting

[Can I hunt on the islands?](#)

Hunting is allowed on the islands for either of the hunting units bordering the river where the island exists. In times where the river is low and there is a land bridge between the island and either side of the river, the parcel of land is considered to be within the attached hunting district and is no longer considered to be an island. Some islands along the river can vary daily and weekly during the times water frequently fluctuate.

[Where are all the big elk bulls and mule deer bucks?](#)

Wildlife within the Missouri Breaks and the Refuge can vary. Mule deer and elk are both scattered across the 1.1 million acres of land. Pin-pointing their location is difficult at best.

[Can I hunt antelope on the Refuge?](#)

Yes. The Refuge does allow pronghorn antelope hunting in accordance with state regulations and with a Montana state hunting license.

[Can I hunt birds on the Refuge?](#)

Upland game birds and mourning dove hunting is allowed on the Refuge in accordance with state regulations and with a Montana state permit. Steel and lead shot are approved for use.

Waterfowl hunting is also allowed on the Refuge in accordance with state regulations and with a Montana state permit. Steel or non-toxic shot only are approved for use.

[Do you have turkeys on the Refuge?](#)

Yes. Turkeys do populate the Refuge in multiple locations. Turkeys are considered an upland game bird and hunting is allowed. State regulations apply and a Montana state permit is required.

[Can I shoot coyotes on the Refuge?](#)

Coyote hunting is allowed from the first day of the antelope rifle season through March 1. Coyotes may be hunted only from 1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset (no permit required). Coyotes cannot be hunted with the aid of electronic calls, aircraft, or mechanized vehicles.

[Can I shoot prairie dogs on the refuge?](#)

No. Unless Refuge-specific hunting seasons are established by Federal regulations, hunting is not allowed.

[Can I target practice on the Refuge?](#)

No. Firearms or bows, when legal for the species pursued, may be removed from a vehicle ONLY in conjunction with a legal hunt for which the hunter is licensed. Firearms may not be discharged at any other time, however you can target practice during bow season with a bow in camp.

Camping

Are there camp grounds on the Refuge?

There are recreational areas for camping within the Refuge boundary. These areas are not maintained or operated by the refuge. They are located on the detailed Refuge map located on the bottom of the “Home” page.

What is the current water level of the river and where can I put my boat in?

To find the current level of the river, visit: <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/current.html>. Boat access is currently not available at Nelson Creek Recreation Area, Crooked Creek Recreation Area, and intermittently available at Fourchette Creek Recreation Area. Due to the fluctuation of the river and lake levels, for the most up-to-date information contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (406) 526-3411, https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/html/Lake_Proj/fortpeck/welcome.html.

Can you camp on the Refuge?

Except where designated as closed, camping (other than backpacking) must take place within 100 yards of the waters of the Missouri River and Fort Peck Reservoir or within 100 yards of numbered roads that are designated as open. ALL camping is limited to 2 weeks within any 30 day period. Any property, including camping equipment, boats, trailers, and other personal property left unattended for a period in excess of 72 hours is subject to removal. Help keep the land and wildlife healthy. Please pack out all trash and restore your campsite to a natural condition when you leave.

Can you have cut wood and have campfires on the Refuge?

Yes. The use of dead and downed wood for campfires is allowed on the Refuge. Select a safe place for campfires. Build only small fires, and make certain that your fire is completely out when you leave. Campfires must be attended at all times. Please check at any Refuge office for fire restrictions during dry periods.

Can I camp on the islands?

Camping on the islands is not permitted. Except where designated as closed, camping (other than backpacking) must take place within 100 yards of the waters of the Missouri River and Fort Peck Reservoir or within 100 yards of numbered roads that are designated as open. ALL camping is limited to 2 weeks within any 30 day period. Any property, including camping equipment, boats, trailers, and other personal property left unattended for a period in excess of 72 hours is subject to removal.

Roads

[What are the road conditions like, and what types of roads allow access to the Refuge?](#)

Please contact the Refuge Headquarters or anyone of the field stations to inquire about the Refuge roads. When wet, these roads become impassable.

Hard-surfaced, all-weather roads are limited to U.S. Highway 191 on the western end of the Refuge and several highways around Fort Peck on the eastern end of the Refuge. Graveled roads include 101-107, 201 to the Rock Creek Boat Ramp, and 321.

[Can you access the Refuge on roads?](#)

Yes. Please see the detailed map located at the bottom of the “Home” page. It shows the Refuge roads and their status as to open or closed.

Safety, Communications, and Emergencies

[What cell phone services are available on the Refuge?](#)

There is no cell phone coverage on the Refuge. If you have a satellite phone the coverage is still sporadic and not reliable.

[What should I do incase of an emergency?](#)

Due to the remoteness of the Refuge, you should be prepared to take care of yourself in an emergency. Have on hand enough food, water and shelter to last a couple of days. Before embarking on your outing, inform family members where you are, how long you will be, and when you expect to return. When weather conditions deteriorate and roads become impassable, due to rain, etc. access is limited and potentially not possible, even in emergencies.

[Do I need to be prepared for wolves, lions, snakes and bears OH MY?](#)

We do not have a population of wolves or bears on the refuge. It is possible that a black bear may migrate through the area on its way to more suitable habitat (Little Rockies/Bearpaw Mountains).

According to the 2008 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Annual Wolf Report, the closest known wolf pack is the Lebo Pack, south of Two Dot near the North End of the Crazy Mountains. That is over 130 miles away from the Refuge. Currently there are no known wolves or wolf hybrids occupying Refuge land or in the surrounding area.

Mountain lions and prairie rattle snakes do inhabit the Refuge as well as other potential dangerous wildlife. Please use precautions when traveling on foot in all areas of the Refuge.

Boats

[Can you use a boat to access areas that are not assessable from roads when hunting?](#)

Boating is permitted on the Refuge. Montana boating laws and regulations apply to all Refuge waters. Extra shear pins, gasoline, and a first aid kit are highly recommended as standard equipment.

From the Refuge's western boundary to the Fred Robinson Bridge, the Missouri River is designated as unit of the National Wild and Scenic River System. Special regulations apply to this segment of the river. General information regarding the wild and scenic portion of the river may be obtained from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Missouri River Breaks Interpretive Center in Fort Benton, Montana at (877) 256-3252 or (406) 622-4000.)

Water levels on the rest of the Missouri River, between the Fred Robinson Bridge (Highway 191) and the Fort Peck Reservoir, fluctuate considerably and dictate what types of boats may be suitable for use. Canoes are suitable during all seasons. Low flows during any time of the year other than spring runoff can make the use of boats with outboard motors dangerous. During periods of low flow, boaters should be cautious of sand bars and other hazards when boating in the river and the reservoir. Some boat ramps may not reach the water during low water periods.

Horses

[Can we take horses on the Refuge?](#)

Yes. Horses maybe used on the Refuge. All horses, mules, llamas, and other types of pack animals must be tied, hobbled, or picketed while in camp. No enclosure may be used to contain animals. Only noxious weed seed free forage is allowed on the Refuge to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. Contact any Refuge office for a list of approved vendors.

[Are there areas to water the horses on the Refuge?](#)

There are stock ponds throughout the Refuge, however we do not have mapped locations for them and it is best to bring your own water for your horses.

ATVs

[Can you use ATVs on the Refuge? My state does not register ATVs, what do I do?](#)

ATVs (motorcycles, quadricycles, etc.) belonging to Montana residents and Non-residents must be street legal and have a metal license plate. Operators must also posses the proper driver's license. Non-resident ATV owners who wish to operate their ATVs on the Refuge can contact the MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks office to obtain a temporary license to operate their ATV in Montana. ATV's used on the refuge must stay on numbers roads only and not be used off road at anytime. Refer to the refuge map for legal numbered roads. Anyone intending to operate an ATV on the Refuge should contact the Refuge staff to ensure the ATV meets the necessary requirements for legal operation.

Wilderness Areas

[Can I use a game cart or other non-mechanized cart in the wilderness areas?](#)

Game carts are not allowed in the designated wilderness area on the UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge. However, the use of game carts is approved for the proposed wilderness areas. Please see the detailed map on the bottom of the “Home” page for the location of all the proposed wilderness areas.

Bicycles

[Can I use my bike on the Refuge?](#)

Yes. Bicycles are allowed on all number roads and seasonally closed roads. Riding a bicycle off-road is not allowed on the Refuge. Bicycles are not allowed in wilderness areas or proposed wilderness areas.

[Can I use my bike on closed roads?](#)

Yes. Bicycles are allowed on seasonally closed roads. Administrative roads that are closed year round to all vehicular transportation are not open to bicycles.